GSWS 204-3: Sex and the City

Professor: Dr. Lucas Crawford
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Lecture: Tuesdays 14:30 – 17:20; B 9200

Course Description:
What does it mean when we say that sexual acts 'take place' in one or another location in a city? If sex and gender are phenomena that 'take place,' how does architecture also 'place' these acts? This course will show that urban buildings and public structures are not merely the locations for gendered and sexual behaviour but are in fact gendered and sexual behaviours in their own right. We will proceed via three related avenues of inquiry. First: how do seemingly neutral pieces of architecture and architectural history require certain (often conservative) notions of gender and sexuality? Secondly: how do acts of public queer sex both form and reform our cities? Third: how are sex, gender, and cities represented as mutually constitutive and to what effect? To respond to these questions, this course will combine film, poetry, architecture, and scholarly accounts of urban space derived from diverse disciplines (film studies, gender studies, design, philosophy, etc.). As a way of gauging the possibilities of acting upon urban norms of sex and gender, we will look to one feminist architecture firm – diller scofidio + renfro – as an ongoing case study. Near the end of the term, students will mount their own urban inventions in one of SFU’s three cities. Note: as this course is about sex – the word is in the title, after all – be prepared to think about and discuss actual sex (not just sexual “identities”) in new intellectual ways.

Learning Outcomes:
- to become familiar with theories of public sexuality in the contexts of modernism and postmodernism
- to understand histories of architecture and histories of gender as mutually constitutive
- to develop a capacity to 'read' public space in and against its aesthetic, political, and local histories
- to grasp the ways in which privacy and decency – as social values – shape ideas about sex, gender, and desire
- to rethink the constraints of one's role in the urban public sphere and to act upon the city anew

Course Texts and Courseware:
1. Samuel Delaney, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (text)
2. *Inception* (film, $9.99 on iTunes)
3. Custom courseware available at the SFU bookstore
4. Many articles available online through the SFU library website

Course Evaluation and Assignments:
Participation 10%
Paper/Ethnography 30%
Urban Intervention Project 30%
Final Exam 30%

Prerequisite: none